

A
SERMON

Preached before the
Right Honourable
THE
Lord Mayor,
ALDERMEN,
AND
Citizens of London;

At the CHURCH of *S^t Mary le Bow*,
September the Second, 1686.

BEING THE
ANNIVERSARY FAST
For the Dreadful Fire in the Year 1666.

By *John Scott*, D.D. Rector of *S^t Peters Poor*, London.

L O N D O N,

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ESTABLISHED

1794

Lord Mayor

ALFRED

CHURCH

ST. MARY

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JOHN V. 14.

Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

THESE Words are the Advice of our Saviour to the impotent man, whom he miraculously cured after he had long waited to no purpose at the Pool of *Bethesda*: And seriously when I consider the miserable state to which this ancient City was reduced by the late stupendious Fire, and the since glorious recovery of it out of its mighty heap of Ruines, it seems to me an exact emblem of this poor Patient in my Text. With him, not long ago, it was reduced to a wretched impotent condition; its goodly Piles lay bed-ridden in their own sad Ruines, almost despairing of Recovery, and the utmost that humane Prudence could hope, was that the next Age might see their Resurrection. But by the miraculous courage and industry with which God inspired their former Inhabitants, behold they are

raised again within a few Years more Glorious and Magnificent than ever; and we that saw their Desolations, and were almost ready to give them over for irreparable, have lived to see them rise again in state and splendour out of their Ashes. And now that our City is revived again, and flourishes in perfect health and vigour, methinks I hear the God of Heaven bespeak her, as our Saviour did his recovered Patient in the Text, *Go thy way, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* In which words you have,

I. A Caution, *Sin no more.*

II. A twofold Reason of it,

1. *Behold, thou art made whole.*

2. *Lest a worse thing come unto thee.*

I begin with the first of these, *Sin no more.* Which words plainly imply that he had been a sinner heretofore; and that because he had so, therefore he was reduced to that wretched impotent condition; that his disease was the punishment of his fault, and the product of his own wickedness: for otherwise he had no reason to take warning by it not to sin again; if his former impotence had not been the effect

fect of his sin, it could not have been urged as a proper argument to perswade him to a future reformation. In this therefore the strength of our Saviour's Caution lies, The impotence under which thou didst so lately languish, and of which I have now recovered thee, was inflicted on thee by God as a just retribution for thy wickedness; and therefore, since thou art thus happily recovered, beware thou dost not sin again, lest thou provoke him by it to scourge thee more severely. So that the main design of this Caution, is to convince us that those Evils and Calamities under which we suffer, are some way or other occasioned by our sin. And indeed if we impartially survey those numerous calamities which oppress the World, we shall find them generally reducible to one of these three Heads. Either (1.) they are the natural Effects of sin, Or (2.) the just Retributions of it, Or (3.) the necessary Antidotes against it. Of each of these very briefly.

(1.) In the first place, Many of those evils and calamities under which we suffer, are the natural Effects of Sin, and such it's possible was the disease of which our Saviour cured this impotent Patient, even the natural effect either of his

his Intemperance, Wantonness, or immoderate Passion, which are the natural causes of most of those diseases under which we languish. For either they are intailed upon us by our Parents, who beget us usually in their own likeness; and so having diseased themselves by their own Debauches, derive to us their frail and crazy constitutions, and leave us Heirs of the woful effects of their own Intemperance and Lasciviousness: for so we commonly find the Stone and Gout, Consumption and Catarrhs derived through many generations from the vices of one wicked Progenitor, who to enjoy the pleasures of an intemperate Draught, or the embraces of a rotten Whore, doth many times entail a lingring torment upon his Children, and his Childrens Children. Others, again, owe their diseases to their own personal vices, and by abusing their Bodies to satisfy their Lusts, convert them into walking Hospitals; they suck in Rheums and Defluxions with their intemperate Draughts, and change the pleasure of a sober and temperate life, for Fevers and the uneasiness of Debauches; they swallow their Surfeits in their gluttonous Meals, and fill their Veins with flat and sprightless humours, till by

by degrees they have turned their sickly Bodies into mere Statues of Earth and Phlegm. And in a word, they waſt themſelves in their inſatiable wantonneſs, and ſacrifice their ſtrength to a beaſtly importunity, and many times contract thoſe noiſome Diſeaſes that make them putrifie alive, and even anticipate the uncleannefs of the Grave. And as our bodily Diſeaſes are generally the natural effects of our Sin, ſo are moſt others of thoſe Calamities under which we groan. Thus Want and Poverty are uſually the effects either of our own Sloth or Prodigality, or elſe of the Fraud and Oppreſſion of thoſe we deal with: and Wars and Devaſtations the natural products either of the Ambition or Covetouſneſs of thoſe who are the Aggreſſors. Thus Sin, you ſee, is the *Pandora's Box*, whence moſt of thoſe ſwarms of Miſeries iſſue that ſting and diſturb the World; and indeed, the God of nature, to deter men from Sin, hath coupled Miſery to it ſo inſeparably, that whiſt he continues things in their natural courſe, we may as ſoon be men without being reaſonable, as ſinful men without being miſerable. Hence we find, That when he had tryed all the arts of Diſcipline on the obſtinate Jews,

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and none were effectual, he at last consigns them to the dire correction of their own Follies, *Jer. 2 19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee.*

(2.) Again, Secondly, Many of those Evils and Calamities under which we suffer, are the just retributions of Sin. For besides those numerous Evils that are naturally appendant unto wicked actions, there are sundry others under which we suffer, that are the more immediate effects of the Divine Displeasure, and are inflicted on us by God as the condign Punishments of our Rebellions against him: and these are such as proceed not from any necessary causality in the sinful actions themselves, but are wholly owing to the Providence of Heaven, which either inflicts them immediately upon us, or else disposes second Causes, contrary to their natural tendency, to come to the production of them; such were the Drowning of the World, the Burning of Sodom and Gomorrha, the Judgement of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, and sundry other such like mentioned in the Scripture. And though in sundry of those Judgements, which God inflicts upon sinful men, his hand doth not so visibly appear as it did in those; yet
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sundry of them are impressed with such visible Characters of the Divine Displeasure, that we have all the reason in the World to conclude them to be the immediate effects of it. As when we see some great and unexpected Calamity befall a Sinner in the very commission of a wicked Action; or when he is punished in kind, and the Judgement inflicted on him bears an exact correspondence with his Sin; or when upon the commission of some notorious Villany, some strange and extraordinary evil befalls him: in these and such like cases, although it's possible they may be the effects of some casual concurrence of second Causes; yet there being such plain indications of designed Punishment in them, it would be very unreasonable to attribute them to a mere blind and undesigning Chance. And therefore, although on the one hand it argues an uncharitable and superstitious mind to attribute every calamity of our Brother to the Righteous Judgement and Displeasure of God; yet on the other hand, it's no less an argument of a stupid wretchless Soul, to attribute those Evils to chance, on which there are such apparent symptoms of the Divine Displeasure. And though there is no doubt

but many of those evil Events that befall us do merely result from the established course and order of necessary Causes; yet there is no man that owns either a Providence or the truth of Scripture, but must readily acknowledge, that in this established course of things, God very often interposes, and for the rewarding of good and punishing of bad men, so varies the courses of these secondary Causes, as to produce good and evil by them, contrary to their natural series and tendencies. For should he have limited himself to the Laws of Nature, and resolved to keep things on for ever in one fatal unvariable course of motion, he must have tyed up his hands from rewarding and punishing, which are the principal acts of his governing Providence; and consequently all his promises and threats of temporal Blessings and Judgments, must have been perfectly null and insignificant. This therefore must be acknowledged by all that have any sense of God and Religion; That many of those Evils under which we suffer, are the just Judgments of God in retribution for our Folly and Wickedness. But I see I must hasten.

(3.) And lastly, many of those Evils and Calamities we endure, are inflicted as necessary

sary Antidotes against Sin. For certainly, considering the degenerate state of Humane Nature, the perverseness and disingenuity of the generality of mankind, Afflictions and Calamities are as necessary to keep us within the bounds of Sobriety, as Chains and Whips are to tame Madmen: And should the great Governour of the World still indulge to us our wills, and accommodate all Events to our desires, we should grow so extravagantly insolent, that 'twould be impossible to keep us within any bounds or compass; and therefore, in charity to us, he is many times forced to cross us, and to inflict less Evils on us, to prevent greater. He sees, that if he should gratifie our fond Desires, 'twould be a cruel kindness to us, and hurt us more than ever it would benefit us; 'twould damp our Piety, or carnalize our Spirits, swell our Pride, or pamper our Luxury, give such a loose to our extravagant Passions, as would in the end render us far more miserable than the want of what we desire can do. And therefore, in mere pity to us, instead of giving us the good we ask for, he sometimes inflicts the contrary evil: and as Physicians sometimes prick a Vein in the Arm to prevent the suffocation of the Heart;

Heart ; so God many times afflicts us to preserve us , diseases our Bodies to Antidote or Cure our Souls. So that though those Evils which God inflicts upon us, are not always intended for Punishments of our Sin , but sometimes for Preservatives against it : yet in this case as well as the other, 'tis Sin that is the cause of it ; 'tis this that makes the evil necessary, and obliges God in mercy to inflict it upon us. He knows the Sin will injure us much more than the evil he prescribes to prevent it ; and therefore being much more solicitous for our safety than our ease, he chooses rather to make us smart, than to suffer us to perish. But if it were not for Sin, which is the worst of Diseases, he would have no need to Antidote us with Affliction ; nor doth he so much delight to grieve the Children of Men, as to afflict them for Afflictions sake. So that were it not for our Sin, either actual or in prospect, we may be sure, he would neither punish, nor afflict us. Thus Sin, you see, is the common Cause of Evil , the fruitful Womb of all kinds of Mischief ; for I doubt not but to one of these three Heads most of the Miseries of Mankind may be reduced, that they are either the natural Effects, the just Punish-

Punishments, or the necessary Preservatives of Sin.

Hence therefore let us learn under all our Calamities to acknowledge our Sins to be the cause of them, to trace up our Evils to their Fountain head, which we shall find is in our own Bosoms. From hence spring all those wasting Wars, those sweeping Plagues, those devouring Fires that make such devastations in the World; from hence are laid those trains of Wild Fire that slaughter our Friends, blow up our Houses, and scatter so many Ruines round about us. O! would to God we would once be sensible of it, that we would every one smite upon his own Thigh, and cry out, Lord, what have I done? what sparks have I added to the common flame? what guilts have I contributed towards the filling up the measure of *England's* Iniquities? But, alas! hitherto we have generally taken a quite contrary course to this. When God's Judgements are upon us, we confess that Sin is the cause of them indeed, but not ours by any means: 'Tis the Sin of the City, cries the Country; 'tis the Sin of the Court, cries the City; 'tis the Sin of this Party, cries one; 'tis the Sin of t'other Party, cries another. Thus the

the Judgements of God are sent from Tithing to Tithing, and no Body will own them, though they call us all Fathers. Well, Sirs, we shall one Day find, God grant it may not be too late first, that this is not the way to prevent the incursions of the Divine Judgements. If ever we mean to put a stop to God's Indignation against us, we must every one lay our Hands upon our own Breasts, and lament his own Sin, and acknowledge his own share in the general Provocation, and promise and engage our selves, that where-ever we have done amiss, we will do so no more : Which, if we wilfully refuse to do, though at present we are made whole, yet we may certainly expect that *a worse thing will come upon us*. And this brings me from the Caution to

II. The Reasons of it, which, as I told you, are two :

1. *Thou art made whole.*
2. *Left a worse thing come unto thee.*

1. I begin with the first, *Behold thou art made whole*, therefore have a care thou sinnest no more : let the mercy I have shown thee in curing thee of thy Disease, have this blessed effect upon thee, to reclaim thee from thy
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thy Sins to a life of Vertue and Purity. So that the sense of this Reason is this, That God's mercy to us in recovering us from past Calamities, lays a great Obligation upon us to reform and amend; but particularly it lays upon us this threefold Obligation, (1.) The Obligation of Gratitude, (2.) of Justice, (3.) and lastly, of Self-interest. Of each of these briefly.

(1.) God's mercy in restoring us from any past Calamity, obliges us in gratitude to amend our lives. 'Tis doubtless one of the most palpable signs of a base profligate Nature, not to be obliged by Favours: 'twould be an injury to a Brute to call him ingrateful; that odious Epithete no Being can deserve, but one that is degenerated into a Devil, that has broke through all that is modest and ingenuous, that is tender and apprehensive in Humane Nature. But to sin on against the mercies of our Deliverer, to take pleasure in provoking him, who took pity on us in our low estate, and snatched us from the brink of ruine, is doubtless the highest Baseness and Ingratitude: for whilst we persist in our sinful courses, under the obligations of his Goodness, we render him the greatest Evil for the greatest Good, and re-

sort his Favours with the basest Indignities. Whilst he is shielding us with his careful Providence, we smite him with the Fist of Wickedness; and, like wretched Vipers, sting and wound him, whilst he is cherishing us in his Bosome. And is this a suitable answer, do we think, to the obligations he has laid upon us? O ungrateful Wretches that we are, do we thus requite the Lord our God? With what confidence can we pretend to any thing that is Modest and Ingenuous, while we thus persist to return the Favours of our God with such insufferable Affronts and Indignities? But then

(2.) Secondly, God's mercy in restoring us from any past Calamity, obliges us in Justice to amend our lives; for by restoring us, he acquires a new right to us. As he is the Author of our Beings, he hath an unalienable right and property in all the powers and faculties of our natures: but every time he restores us from an approaching Ruine, he doth, as it were, create us a new, he gives us our Lives and Beings afresh, and thereby renews his Title to us; and so many times as he preserves us, so many Lives and Beings he giveth us; and consequently, so many additional rights.

rights and properties he acquires in us. And when he hath so many ways entitl'd himself to us, by creating, preserving, and restoring us, what monstrous injustice is it in us still to alienate our selves from him, and list those powers and faculties into the service of his Enemies, that are his by so many Titles? O unjust that we are, thus to fight against God with his own Weapons, and affront his Authority with the effects of his Bounty! for by persisting in Sin under his Preservations, we do not only rob him of our selves, in whom he hath such an unalienable Propriety, but also imploy our selves against him. We do not only purloin his Goods, but convert them into instruments of Rebellion against him, than which there is nothing can be more outrageously injurious. O wretched man, that very Tongue with which thou blasphemest him, had e're this been silent for ever, had not he stretch'd out his hand and restored thee. Those Eyes, through which thou shootest the noisome Fire-balls of thy Lust, had been e're this clos'd up in endless darkness, had not he taken pity on thee, and snatch'd thee from the brinks of Ruine. Those Members of thine, which thou imployest as Instruments

of unrighteousness against him, had now been rotting in a cold Grave, had not his tender mercy preserved thee. And canst thou be such a barbarous Wretch, as not only to deny him the use of what he gives, but even to injure him with his own Gifts? Consider, I beseech you, how heinously he must needs resent such monstrous injustice and ingratitude. Hear but how he complains in a parallel case, *Isa. 1. 2, 3. Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.*

(3.) Thirdly and lastly, God's mercy in restoring us from past Calamities obliges us in Self-interest to reform and amend. For if we do not answer the end of God's deliverances, they will prove Curses instead of Benefits to us; and what he intended for a favour, will convert into an aggravation of our sin and punishment. The great end why God delivered us, was to win us by his Goodness to forsake our sins, and give us space to repent of them: for so the Apostle tells us, *That the goodness and long-suffering of God leads us to repentance,*

tance, in *Rom. 2. 4.* But if it doth not lead us thither, it will leave us in a far worse condition than it found us; *i. e.* 'twill leave us loaded with much heavier guilt, and bound over to much sorer punishment. For he that sins on under his Preservations, is only preserved to *treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, and to prepare more Fuel for his future Flames. So that, if he still persist in his wickedness, it had been much better for him that God had let him alone to perish under his affliction. For then he had past more innocent into the other World, and suffered there a much cooler damnation: Whereas now, whenever his wretched Ghost departs into Eternity, it will go attended with a louder cry of guilts, with the cry of so many more wronged mercies and abused preservations; which will most fearfully inhanche her Accounts, and inflame the Reckoning of her torments: so that when she comes into the other World among those miserable Spirits, that were snatched away in the common calamities from whence she was rescued and preserved, she will find her self plunged into a condition so much more intolerable, that she will wish a thousand times she had been snatched away with them,
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that so she might never have had the opportunity to contract those guilts that are the woful causes of it. Wherefore, as we would not make the mercies of God the causes of our misery, and turn our Preservations into Judgments; we are highly obliged upon every recovery from past Judgments and Calamities, to reform and amend our lives.

And now what remains, but that we seriously consider with our selves how much we are concerned in this Argument. We of this Generation are a people whom God hath exercised with wondrous Judgments and Deliverances. We have many of us lived to see the Bowels of our Native Country ripped up by an Unnatural War, the righteous Cause of the Prince and Father of our Country oppressed by prosperous Villany; his innocent Blood, our Laws and Liberties and Religion sacrificed to the lust of Rebels and Usurpers. And when we had long suffered the consequent miseries and confusions, our merciful God took pity upon us, and after a long Exile, and without the charge and smart of War and Bloodshed, restored to us again the lawful Heir and Successor of our Crown, and, with him, our Liberties and Religion. This, one would have

have thought, was enough to oblige a people of any ingenuity, and to indear to us for ever the Author of such a miraculous mercy. But when instead of being reclaimed by his Goodness we grew worse and worse, his anger was kindled again against us, and in his sore displeasure he breathed forth a destroying Pestilence upon us, that in a few Months swept our Streets, unpeopled our Houses, and turned our Towns and Cities into *Golgotha's*. But in the midst of so many Deaths we were preserved, and under the Shield of that Providence were kept in safety, when ten thousand Arrows flew about our ears. And could we possibly resist the powerful charms of such an indearmg, such a distinguishing kindness? Alas! Yes, we could, and did, and were so far from being conquered by it, that we grew more obstinate and rebellious. This incensed him against us anew, and with Fire-brands in his hands his vengeance came and kindled our Houses into a devouring flame, that with wondrous fury did spread and enlarge it self from House to House, and from Street to Street, till it had laid this famous Metropolis of our Nation in a Heap of Ruines. But yet in the midst of Judgment, God remembered Mercy;

Mercy ; and when the unruly Element had baffled all our Arts, and triumphed over all our resistance, God put a Bridle unto his mouth, and stopped him in his full carriere : by which means a great part of us were preserved, and snatched as Fire-brands out of the Flame. And though many of us saw our Houses and Estates buried in the Ruines it made ; yet we have lived to see, and that within a few years, the consumed *Phoenix* rise out of her Ashes in greater Glory and Lustre than ever. And now what have we rendred to the Lord for all these Mercies and signal Preservations ? O ungrateful that we are ! We have turned his mercies into wantonness, and fought against him with his own favours : We have spent those lives which he hath preserved to us, in grieving, provoking and dishonouring him : We have turned those Houses he hath restored to us, into open Stages of pride and luxury : We have consumed those Estates which he hath repaired, in supplying our manifold rebellions against him. Thus with his own mercies we have waged War with him. What then can we expect, but that he should disarm us of those mercies which we have so foully mis-employed, and thunder his Judgments upon

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us to avenge our abuse of them? For if he cannot melt our obstinacy with the Fire of Mercy; 'tis fit he should attempt to break it with the Hammer of Judgment: and if when he hath tryed lighter Judgments, they will not do; 'tis fit he should second them with greater and heavier. Which brings me,

2. To the second Reason of the Caution in the Text, *Lest a worse thing come upon thee.* i. e. Beware thou dost not continue stubborn under thy past Corrections, lest thou thereby provoke thy angry God to lay his hand yet heavier upon thee, and to scourge thee with Scorpions instead of Rods. For it is the usual method of the Divine Providence, when lesser Judgments prove ineffectual, to second and inforce them with greater. Thus he threatens to deal with Israel, Levit. 26. 21, 23, 24. *And if ye walk contrary to me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins. And if yet ye will not be reformed by these things, but walk contrary to me, then will I walk contrary to you, and will punish ye yet seven times more for your sins.* And just as he threatened, so it came to pass: For as they continued obstinate under God's Judgments; so he continued to plague them forer and forer, till at

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last perceiving their Disease to be incurable, he cut 'em off, and utterly destroyed them. And in this method of punishing Sinners gradually with sharper and sharper strokes, when they continue obstinate under correction, there is a great deal of Reason and Wisdom. For (1.) Their obstinacy swells and inhances their Guilt. (2.) It renders severe Punishments necessary. And (3.) Those severer Punishments render their final Destruction more inexcusable. Of each of these briefly.

(1.) God punishes men with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter Judgments; because their Obstinacy is a greater aggravation of their Guilt. For though our Reason indeed tells us, That Sin is the greatest and most dangerous Evil in the World; yet Reason and Argument hath not comparably that force to perswade men, as their own Sense and Experience hath: and they will be much sooner perswaded of the reality of any evil, by feeling the smart of it, than by a thousand dry Arguments against it. And therefore though it be a great aggravation of our guilt, to sin against the clear convictions of our Reason; yet 'tis a much greater, to sin against the sharp and dolorous perceptions of our own

own Sense and Experience. But now, while the Judgments of God are upon men, they feel the dire effects of their Sin; and therefore if notwithstanding this, they still persist in it, they sin against their Sense, as well as their Reason: which is, in effect, a plain defiance of God, and a daring him to do his worst with us. For this in effect is the sense and interpretation of our Obstinacy: O God, I know thou art angry with my Sins, by the dire effects I now feel and experience; but be it known to thee, I despise thy Vengeance, and am resolved to sin on bravely in despite of all the Judgments thou canst arm against me. And what greater aggravation of sin can there be, than to repeat it with such a blasphemous contempt of the Most High? He is a daring Thief, we say, that will venture to rob within sight of the Gallows; and he is as insolent a Sinner, that dares sin on in the face of Judgment. It was look'd upon as a monstrous piece of contumacy in the Jews, that when God had only forewarned them by the Prophet, *Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you; return ye now therefore every one from his evil way: they returned this arrogant Answer, There is no hope, but we will walk every one*

after his own devices, and we will do every one the imagination of his evil heart, Jer. 18. 11, 12. But how much more arrogant would it have been, had the Judgment which was only devising against them been actually executed upon them ! Such an Answer then had been a plain Declaration, That they were finally resolved to stand it out against God to the last, and to take no Quarter at his hands, though they perished for ever in their Rebellions. And when mens Guilts are thus inanced, 'tis fit their Punishment should be proportionable : for otherwise they would be lookt upon as things that happen to men without any Providential Disposal. But now, by regularly proportioning the Evils of Suffering to the Evils of Sin, and coupling lesser Evils with lesser Guilts, and greater with greater, and so equally balancing and adjusting the Punishment to the Fault ; God makes his arm bare to us, and gives us a plain demonstration, That the Evils we suffer are the Rods of his just displeasure.

(2.) God punishes men with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter Judgments, because their obstinacy renders heavier Judgments necessary. For Punishments being,

being designed by God for our Cure and Recovery, it's necessary they should be proportioned to the degree and strength of our Disease; and consequently, when the Disease of our Sin is grown stronger and more malignant, the remedy of our Punishment should be made sharper and more operative. For when men are grown inveterately wicked, to attempt their reformation with smaller Judgments, is to batter a Wall of Marble with a Pot-Gun. Such obstinate Rebels must be stormed with the loudest Artillery of Heaven, before they will listen to a Surrender. An Anvil will as soon yield to the Fillip of our Finger, as a hardened Sinner relent under soft and gentle Corrections. He must be alarm'd with some rousing Judgment, and lash'd till he bleeds again under the Rods of the Almighty, or in all probability he will be undone for ever. His Disease is inveterate, and not to be removed but by the strongest Catharticks; and therefore to prescribe him a Course of gentle Physick, would be to try Experiments upon him, and vex and disturb him to no purpose. God therefore, to cure the folly and obstinacy of Sinners, is many times fain to treat them with rigour and severity, when

when he finds the mild and gentle methods of his Providence defeated by them. But first usually he tries the softer and more grateful Remedies, being unwilling to grieve and afflict his Creatures, when there is any other way to recover them. But when softer will not do, 'tis Mercy in him to apply severer; and his last most commonly are the severest, these being the Causticks, as it were, which he is said to apply to our Lethargick Souls, when no other means will awake and recover us.

(3.) And lastly, God punishes men with heavier, when they continue obstinate under lighter Judgments, to render their final destruction more inexcusable if they won't be reclaimed. For when God's Threats will not awake men, he usually sends forth his smaller Judgments; which, like the Van-Couriers of an Army, are to begin the Skirmish, before he falls on with his main Body to ruine and destroy them. Which method he observes, out of great pity to his sinful Creatures, whom he always threatens before he strikes, and always strikes before he destroys, that so he may give them timely and effectual warning to arm themselves by Repentance, to prevent their destruction :

struction: and accordingly the first Judgment he lets off, he designs for a Warning Piece, to give notice of a second, and the second of a third, and all of that ruining and exterminating Judgment which brings up the Rear, and is to conclude the Tragedy. So that his foregoing Judgments do still give notice of the following, and these of the succeeding, and all of that final destruction in the War which closely pursues, and, unless we repent, will at last overtake us. And when our designed destruction approaches us step by step, and every succeeding Judgment brings it nearer and nearer to us, so that we plainly see it coming on when 'tis yet at a distance from us, and yet will not stand out of its way, but desperately meet, dare and defie it; how can we charge God with being either unjust or unkind to us, who hath taken such an effectual course to warn us of, and retrieve us from it? When he thus punish'd us more and more, as our Sin grew greater and greater, this, one would have thought, might have been sufficient to terrifie us from our Sins; which, we plainly saw, were bringing such mischiefs upon us, and to forewarn us of that gloomy and fatal issue that attended them. By all which,
God:

God doth abundantly manifest how extremely unwilling he is to destroy us. But if after all, we will force him to it, Men and Angels must confess, That he hath been infinitely just and good to us, and that the guilt of our blood lies upon our own heads.

And now if this be true, That when lesser Judgments will not reclaim men, God's usual Method is to second them with greater; how much reason have we of this Nation to expect and dread a succession of greater Judgments than those we have hitherto felt; considering how much we have degenerated under our past Corrections, and all along hardened our selves under the strokes of the Almighty? I do not love to abode ill things; and did not our own Sins prognosticate more mischief to us than any of those suspected Appearances that fill our heads with so many fears and jealousies, I could easily secure my mind of the continuance of our happiness under far more threatening apprehensions. But, Alas! when I consider how obstinately we have persisted in our sinful ways, in defiance both of the Mercies and Judgments of Heaven; how, notwithstanding the advantage we have had of being better, as having been baptized into the

the best Church, and educated in the purest Religion in the World : a Religion that advances no Temporal Design, no invention to enrich or aggrandize its Priests ; that hath no other Aim or Project but only that blessed one of making men good here, and happy hereafter ; that hath no Arts of Compromise between mens Lusts and Consciences, no Devices to supersede the Eternal Obligations of Piety and Vertue, but binds 'em fast upon our Consciences by all that we can hope or fear. When, I say, notwithstanding we have had this advantage of being good, by being instituted in such a Religion as this, I consider how we have grown worse and worse, as if we had resolved to give the World an Experiment how bad it's possible for men to be under the most effectual means of being good ; I cannot but be fearful and jealous, That our multiplying our Guilts will at length provoke God to multiply his Judgments upon us. And O would to God, that for this reason we would all be jealous, that we would ground our fears upon our Sins, and Incorrigibleness under the past Judgments of God ! then they would produce in us far different effects from what they have hitherto done ; then, instead of firing us

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with

with discontent against our Governours, and exciting us to Faction, Sedition and Clamour, they would turn all our animosities against our own wicked Lives; which are the Causes of all the Evils that we feel or fear: then would our Fears and Jealousies improve into Piety towards God, Loyalty towards our Prince, and Charity and Justice towards one another, and render us constant to the Profession, and faithful as to the Practice of our holy Religion. Which blessed Effects could they once produce, then farewell to all Causes of Fears and Jealousies; then our God would soon disperse all the Clouds that hang over us, with the light of his Countenance, and render us a glorious, a happy and a prosperous people, and crown us with Everlasting Glory and Happiness hereafter.

F I N I S.

*Books Written by the Reverend Doctor
Scott, and Printed for W. Kettilby,
and T. Horne.*

THE *Christian Life*, Part I. from its Beginning to its Consummation in Glory. With Directions for private Devotions, and Forms of Prayer fitted to the several states of Christians.

The *Christian Life*, Part II. Wherein the Fundamental Principles of Christian Duty are Assigned, Explained and Proved. Vol. I.

The *Christian Life*, Part II. Wherein that Fundamental Principle of Christian Duty, the Doctrine of our Saviour's Mediation, is Explained and Proved. Vol. II.

A Sermon preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, &c. *Decemb. 16. 1683.* on *Proverbs* xxiv. 21.

A Sermon preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, &c. *July 26. 1685.* being the Day of Thanksgiving for his Majesty's Victory over the Rebels; On *2 Sam. xviii. 28.*

A Sermon preached at the Assizes held at *Chelmsford* in the County of *Essex*, *Aug. 31. 1685.* on *Rom. xiii. 1.*

A Sermon preached before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, &c. *Sept. 2. 1686.* being the *Anniversary Fast* for the dreadful Fire in the Year 1666. On *John v. 14.*